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C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000374

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM IZ

SUBJECT: NAJAF INA EXPECTS WIDESPREAD ELECTION DAY VIOLENCE

REF: HILLAH 0361

CLASSIFIED BY: ALFRED FONTENEAU, REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO,
AL-HILLAH, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is a SET NAJAF cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: The Najaf head of former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party (INA) told SET Najaf December 9 that he expected widespread election day violence directed at INA supporters and facilities by supporters of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA, ballot number 555.) The official also predicted widespread fraud by UIA supporters, but nonetheless said that the National Iraqi List slate (ballot number 731, the coalition which includes Allawi's INA would likely capture four of Najaf's eight contested seats. End summary.

¶3. (C) SET Najaf met with Abdul Al-Esswi, the Najaf head of the INA. He mentioned the December 6 improvised explosive device (IED) attack on an INA office (reftel) and predicted that more attacks would take place, and reach a peak on election day. Al-Esswi blamed UIA partisans for violent attacks, and for destroying 60,000 National Iraqi List posters and 1,200 banners. He related that he thought the UIA would attempt to "make an example" of his coalition.

¶4. (C) Al-Esswi also related his fears of widespread fraud. For this he blamed members of the security forces loyal to the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Moqtada Al-Sadr. He maintained that at least 50 percent of the Najaf Iraqi Police (IP) are SCIRI- or Sadr-affiliated. He noted that since IPs oversee unused ballots, the conditions were ripe for militia-affiliated IPs to fill out unused ballots in favor of the UIA.

¶5. (C) Attempts to illegally tip the election scales in the UIA's favor had already begun, Al-Esswi said. He claimed that Hadi Al-Jid, an electoral station manager in the town of Hyderia, near the Karbala border, had been offered 20 million Iraqi dinar (approximately \$13,600 USD) by the UIA to allow their operatives to control his polling station, where they would then stuff ballot boxes and insure a strong UIA showing. (Note: Al-Jid, contacted by SET Najaf on December 13, reported a slightly different offer. He stated that a "political entity" had approached him about advertising in and around the polling place and offered him 5 million Iraqi dinar (approximately \$3,400 USD). He said that no one had attempted to persuade him to commit fraud. End note.)

¶6. (C) A concerted effort was underway to destroy the reputation of Iyad Allawi, the INA and the 731 slate, Al-Esswi alleged. These efforts include what Al-Esswi calls "lies and distortions," such as a reportedly persistent rumor that the INA supports the return of the Saddam Hussein regime. Another rumor, again blamed on UIA operatives, has the INA supportive of the rehabilitation and employment of all Baathists, including those guilty of crimes under the Saddam Hussein regime. (Note: INA candidates and supporters, including Al-Esswi, have declared that their stance is to rehabilitate Baathists who only joined the party for reasons of survival or expediency, and to prosecute those who committed crimes. End note.)

¶7. (C) Comment: Recent reports of violence directed at INA facilities and supporters lend some credence to Al-Esswi's warnings. That Al-Jid's tale of attempted fraud did not match up with Al-Esswi's accusations does not necessarily disprove the charge, since Al-Jid would likely seek to diminish his own culpability in electioneering when speaking to an American official. End comment.

FONTENEAU